

## CHAPTER ONE

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Orientation

In order to identify all the criteria that comprise the discipline of sport psychology, several definitions have been considered. Firstly, psychology may be defined as “the primarily scientific study of human and animal behaviour, affect and cognition” (Wann, 1997). Sport may be defined as “activities involving powers and skills, competition, strategy, and/or chance, and engaged in for the enjoyment, satisfaction, and/or personal gain (such as income) of the participant and/or others (e.g. spectators), including organised and recreational sports” (Wann, 1997). According to Wann (1997), sport psychology can then be defined as “the primarily scientific study of the behavioural, affective and cognitive reactions to sport settings, including the reactions of both participants and spectators”.

Sports psychology is considered to be both academic and service oriented; not only is theoretical knowledge advanced, but the practical needs of both trainers and athletes are provided for. Besides the instruction of psychological strategies and techniques (e.g. goal setting, arousal control, visualisation and concentration skills), sport psychology contends with the psychological implications of injury, burnout, performance and

perseverance. It is therefore self-explanatory that sport psychology includes more than the improvement of sporting achievement; it covers the psychological dimensions of all facets of physical exercise and sport.

Although it is evident that there is a requirement for focused exploration and analysis into sport psychology arenas, this study concentrates on the domain of golf in particular. Golf players will form the vehicle for this research effort, for the following reasons:

- The need for a parsimonious, concise research study
- Empirical evidence exists with regard to the personality profiles of motorcar racers and soccer players, amongst others. However, no profiles have yet been established for golf players, and in particular South African golf players.
- South Africa has produced a number of world-class golfers over the past years. Nevertheless, it remains essential to constantly improve levels of performance predictability and consistency of both current and future competitors.

## **1.2 Motivation**

Sporting professionals, including sport psychologists, trainers and athletes, continuously search for ways in which to improve or enhance performance levels. It is widely recognised that success within various levels of the sporting arena is not only due to physical talent or training. Psychological factors, e.g. motivation, anxiety levels, arousal levels and personality, all contribute to a final consequence – winning or losing. Internationally, sport has become more than a “game”; professionalisation has meant that the individual or the team’s performance can be translated to monetary value. Personal achievement interests may also form a compelling part of

the desire for success e.g. status, increased self-esteem or personal growth development. Therefore, just as physical trainers are considered an essential part of a sportsman's functioning, so too is the contribution of a mental fitness expert becoming realised.

Considering the degree of pressure placed upon athletes and their trainers to achieve greater levels of performance output, the need for research into the psychological realms of sport is crucial; in South Africa, in particular, sport psychology research has an underdeveloped history. It is suggested then, that quantitative or qualitative scientific exploration into the neglected behavioural, cognitive and emotional aspects of sport may serve to formulate sport specific psychological theories and models. Generation of these viable theories or models serve to increase our understanding and implementation of the concepts and processes involved in performance-related interventions.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The research study that follows is an attempt to investigate the correlation between personality, locus of control and self-efficacy expectations in golf players, with the intention of establishing a particular trait profile. Within clinical psychology in general, it is accepted that certain personality "types" may be associated with positive or negative psychic propensities (Wann, 1997), e.g. an inclination toward self-sufficiency, attention, or motivation, or a susceptibility to depression, aggression or dependency. It may therefore be anticipated that the same would hold for sport psychology; a specific personality profile could suggest a predilection for superior performance within athletic functioning. The value of establishing such a profile lies in the early identification of athletic potential, which implies results that include greater achievement levels and improved career management for the sporting fraternity as an entity.

## 1.4 Conclusion

Further research into sport psychology domains within the South African context is essential; without scientific investigation the discipline would stagnate and be unsuccessful in advancing beyond current boundaries and knowledge (Wann, 1997; Singer, Hausenblas, & Janelle, 2001). It is hoped that this study will contribute to the current body of data in a constructive and effective way, whilst attempting to provide a launching point for future measures of application.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature pertaining to the constructs of personality, locus of control orientation, and self-efficacy expectation. Chapter 3 examines the research methodology. Chapter 4 includes an integrated data analysis and discussion of results, as well as the implications of the findings. Finally, chapter 5 concludes the current study, discusses the limitations, and presents recommendations for future directions.